

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9948

C O N F I D E N T I A L BUENOS AIRES 9948

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, AR

SUBJECT: CONFLICT BETWEEN INTERIOR MINISTER AND FEDERAL INTERVENTOR

REF: BA 0613

1. FEDERAL INTERVENTOR IN CORDOBA, RAUL LACABANNE, HAS COME UNDER INCREASING ATTACK FROM OPPOSITION PARTIES AND MODERATE ELEMENTS IN PERONISM. PROVINCIAL SECRETARY OF INTERIOR, FRANCISCO GARCIA LAVAL (A CLOSE ASSOCIATE OF INTERIOR MINISTER ROCAMORA), RESIGNED SOME WEEKS BACK, INDICATING PRIVATELY AS HIS MOTIVE DISAGREEMENT WITH LACABANNE'S RIGID HOSTILITY TO ALL PARTIES AND FACTIONS NOT ALIGNED WITH PERONIST FAR-RIGHT WINGB

2. UCR SOURCES FROM CORDOBA HAVE COMMENTED TO EMBOFFS THAT UNLESS GOA FIRES OR SHARPLY CIRCUMSCRIBES LACABANNE, LATTER'S INTRANSIGENT AND PRIMITIVE ATTITUDE TOWARD THEM MAY DRIVE NATIONAL UCR INTO OPPOSITION EVEN FASTER THAN IT IS ALREADY GOING. THEY ADMIT THAT LACABANNE HAS DONE A GOOD JOB IN MOVING AGAINST TERRORISTS BUT ADD THAT UNFORTUNATELY HE SEEMS UNABLE TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN TERRORISTS AND MEMBERS OF LOYAL OPPOSITION.

3. SENTIMENT AGAINST LACABANNE BEGAN TO JELL IMMEDIATELY AFTER BOMBING OF "LA VOZ DEL INTERIOR", AN INDEPENDENT
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NEWSPAPER WHICH IS ALSO CORDOBA'S LARGEST. WHILE SOME

BELIEVE "LA VOZ" WAS BOMBED BY LOPEZ REGA'S MEN IN ORDER TO EMBARRASS LACABANNE (SEE REFTTEL), MANY OTHERS, INCLUDING THE CORDOBA BRANCH OF THE UCR, ARE CONVINCED LACABANNE HIMSELF ORDERED THE BOMBING. WHATEVER THE TRUTH OF THE MATTER, THE RESULTS ARE THE SAME. LACABANNE HAS BEEN HELD RESPONSIBLE BY PUBLIC OPINION AND HAS BEEN HURT. IT WAS THIS MORE THAN ANY OTHER FACTOR WHICH BEGAN TO BRING THE MATTER OF HIS CONTINUED INTERVENIENCE TO A HEAD.

4. INTERIOR MINISTER ROCAMORA, A MODERATE, HAS MADE IT CLEAR THAT IF HE HAS HIS WAY, LACABANNE WILL GO. HE CONDEMNED THE BOMBING OF "LA VOZ" AND PROMISED PROTECTION SO THAT IT COULD REOPEN. WHEN ASKED IN A PRESS CONFERENCE FEB 12 WHETHER THE GOA HAD CONFIDENCE IN LACABANNE, ROCAMORA POINTEDLY REPLIED THAT, "CONFIDENCE IS A RELATIVE THING."

5. LACABANNE CAME TO BUENOS AIRES YESTERDAY (FEB 13), APPARENTLY IN AN EFFORT TO PLEAD HIS CASE AND DRUM UP SUPPORT. HE CALLED ON ROCAMORA IMMEDIATELY AFTER ARRIVAL. NEITHER MAN HAD ANY COMMENT AFTER THEIR ALMOST ONE HOUR MEETING. ASKED BY NEWSMEN AT THE AIRPORT, HOWEVER, ABOUT HIS POSSIBLE DEFENESTRATION, LACABANNE INSISTED THAT THE PRESIDENT HAD APPOINTED HIM AND THAT ONLY SHE COULD DISMISS HIM.

6. COMMENT: LACABANNE ISSUE IS OF INTEREST BECAUSE OF ITS FALL-OUT ON NATIONAL POLITICAL SCENE. ROCAMORA GIVES EVIDENCE OF TRYING TO ASSERT HIMSELF MORE AGGRESSIVELY THAN HE HAS IN THE PAST. WHETHER OR NOT HE CAN FORCE LACABANNE OUT WILL BE AN INTERESTING TEST OF HIS STRENGTH AND INFLUENCE IN THE GOVERNMENT. THOUGH BOTH ARE ON THE RIGHT, LOPEZ REGA AND LACABANNE ARE NOT POLITICAL ALLIES, REPRESENTING, AS THEY DO, DIFFERENT RIGHTIST FACTIONS. SINCE THERE IS SOME EVIDENCE THAT ROCAMORA IS TRYING DISCREETLY TO CIRCUMSCRIBE LOPEZ REGA'S POWER, HOWEVER, IT WOULD NOT BE SURPRISING TO SEE LOPEZ REGA TRYING TO GIVE LACABANNE A HAND AGAINST ROCAMORA.
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